

# Helicopter assisted burning Lake McKay ALT

Traditional landowners in the Tanami used a chopper recently to burn land around Lake McKay near the West Australian border.

By lighting lots of small fires in the cool time they broke up large areas of same-age spinifex to protect fire sensitive vegetation and promote bush foods and habitat for animals that need different ages of grasses for food and shelter.

The traditional landowners from Yuen-dumu and Nyrripi are concerned about large scale hot wildfires like those that burnt out vast tracts of land between Lajamanu, Tennant Creek and south of the Granites mine in 2007.

"Gotta burn him little bit, little bit, little bit – in cool time. Gotta stop that hot fire, dangerous one, burning up all the trees and food for animals," traditional landowner Alice Nampijinpa Henwood said.

Landowners Paddy Lewis and Micky Singleton took the opportunity to put in an east – west fire break between their countries at Mina Mina and Yalalya.

This group were the first to use a helicopter for fire management in the CLC region and fully understand the scale of the problem they are facing.

Next year they are keen to return with a chopper set up to drop incendiaries: ping pong sized balls filled with a flammable mixture that are injected with glycol that triggers a chemical reaction. The balls are dropped through a special chute and ignite when they hit the ground.

The country is some of the most inaccessible in the country: there are no roads and plenty of sand dunes.

Helicopter access also made it possible for the group to see the damage done by wild camels to their rock holes and soak-ages.

"Rock holes marlukalangu (belong to the kangaroos) not camels," said Paddy Japaljarri Simms.

Mr Simms and others will return over the next year to teach young people interested in ranger work how to maintain the rock holes and to continue land management planning as they work toward an Indigenous Protected Area on their country.

The chopper also provided a rare opportunity to visit important and remote sites and everyone in the group took the opportunity to record ecological knowledge and site information to pass down to the younger generations and to include in the IPA plan of management currently under development.

Funding for the helicopter assisted burning was provided by the NDMP (Natural Disaster Mitigation Program).



Top: l-r Alice Henwood, Margaret Lewis and Paddy Lewis ready for the ride

Above left: Paddy Simms

Above right: a spectacular rim of fire near Lake Mackay

Left: Otto Simms, Walter Tex and Nelson Tex

## Ant with big head stopped by Malak Malak rangers

Aboriginal rangers from Nauiyu Nambiu have been instrumental in eradicating a pest ant species from the Daly River area south of Darwin.

The Malak Malak rang-

ers worked with the CSIRO to stamp out the African big-headed ant, which scientists say is one of the world's worst pests.

Rangers planted bait where the ants had been detected and it killed off the colonies.

Ecologists believe the ant

continues to have a strong hold in the Top End of the Northern Territory, but with the successful results at Daly River, it is possible to get rid of it in isolated locations and areas of particular conservation importance.